

Civil Rights

One of the greatest contributions of South Carolina's African-Americans is in civil rights. They moved the state and the nation to practice the values of democracy. They gave us all a better chance to be the best we can possibly be. As a result, all of us today live in a happier and wealthier state and nation.

South Carolina has produced many civil rights leaders of national fame. You can read about them in most modern history books. They include Mary McLeod Bethune, Modjeska Simkins, Matthew Perry, and of course, Jesse Jackson. We can also be proud of leaders whose fame usually does not go beyond South Carolina. Many of these spent most of their lives within the state. You will meet some of these people, perhaps for the first time. They include Septima Poinsett Clark, James Hinton, and I. DeQuincey Newman.

We want to include two other groups of people. First, we will look at civil rights leaders who history books have almost completely ignored. Two of the men you will meet that fit into this group are Ossie McKaine and the Reverend J. A. Delaine. Second, in telling the story of how we moved from a segregated state to a state where all people had at least some opportunities, we will look at average people. They took great risks in their daily lives to bring about change. Without them, change could never have taken place no matter how great the leaders. We should be proud of them all.

The Story of Ossie McKaine

Osceola E. McKaine is one of the least well-known civil rights leaders both in and out of South Carolina. He is one of the most remarkable men ever born in this state when we consider his many accomplish-

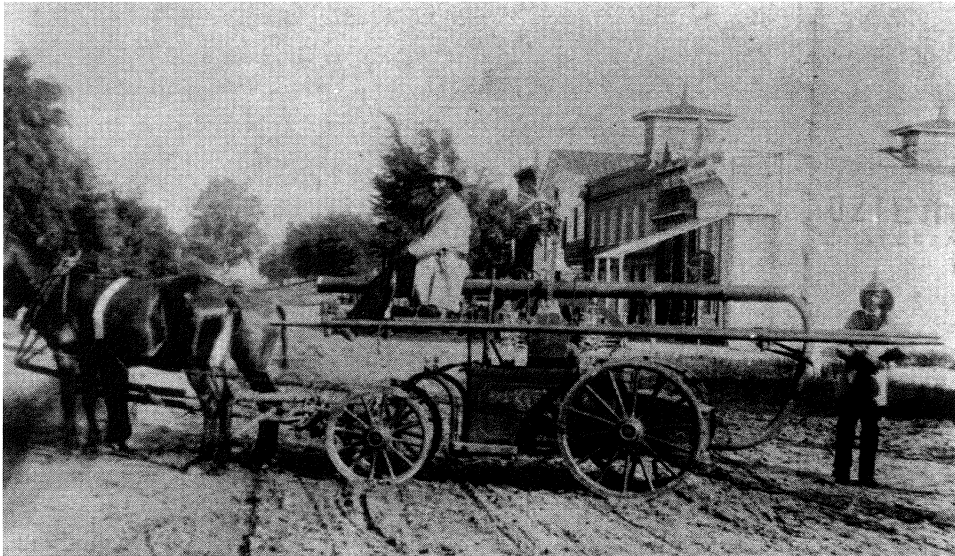
ments. McKaine was a military hero, a successful businessperson, a great orator, a journalist, and a civil rights organizer. He spoke four languages fluently and could get by in about eleven other languages. Despite the limited education South Carolina provided him, he did all this.

"Ossie" McKaine, as he was called by his friends, is also a good person with whom to begin the story of the civil rights revolution in South Carolina because of when he lived. He was born in Sumter in 1892. This is the period when the last surviving African-American leaders from Reconstruction, like Robert Smalls, were being forced out of power. The legislature was passing segregation laws, called "Jim Crow" laws. After 1896, the state could pass such laws and not be in violation of the U.S. Constitution. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that the "equal protection" clause of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution did not forbid separate facilities for the races. So McKaine grew up with legally enforced segregation. He helped change that. Before he died in 1955, he saw the beginning of the end of these laws. Just the year before, the U.S. Supreme Court had overturned the *Plessy* decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. The Court decided that separation did violate the 14th Amendment. Before we get too far ahead of the story, let us go back and look at McKaine's early life.

At the age of sixteen, McKaine left the state to begin an adventure that would take him far. At first he worked on a merchant ship and saw Latin America. He ended up in Boston where he furthered his education. Then, at the age of twenty-two, he joined the U.S. Army. He was first stationed in the Philippines. Later, the Army sent him with General John J.



(Top) African-Americans had to provide their own facilities during days of segregation, such as this library in Greenville. Reproduced from Constance B. Schulz, Ed., The History of S.C. Slide Collection, slide I-96 (Sandlapper Publishing Company, 1989). Courtesy of Greenville County Library. (Bottom) Even fire companies were segregated. Each race had their own department. This was one of two African-American fire units in Georgetown in the early 1900s. Reproduced from Constance B. Schulz, Ed., The History of S.C. Slide Collection, slide I-104 (Sandlapper Publishing Company, 1989). Courtesy of Georgetown County Library.



Pershing to fight the Mexican bandit Pancho Villa. Three years later, after the outbreak of the First World War, he joined a new African-American unit, the 367th Regiment. It inherited the old name from African-American cavalry units. They were called the "Buffalo Regiment." McKaine was now an officer. He fought in the trenches of France and was promoted to first lieutenant for his bravery in taking a German fortress. After the war, he left the Army and came home a hero.

For a while McKaine worked in New York as a journalist. He met important figures in the "Harlem

Renaissance" like James Weldon Johnson. McKaine became more and more frustrated and angry with the barriers created by racism. So he returned to Europe. He remembered Europeans had much less prejudice toward people of color. He opened a very successful nightclub in Belgium. He hired many African-American entertainers who delighted European audiences with jazz and other new kinds of African-American music. Living in a luxurious home nearby, he seemed completely happy until racism once again forced its way into his life.

In 1940, the German army took over Belgium. The invaders forced McKaine's club to entertain Nazi officers. He closed the club and left for the United States. His arrival in Sumter began the third and perhaps most important phase of his life.

McKaine supported himself once again by writing. Although most of his work appeared in African-American newspapers, *The State* newspaper in Columbia carried some of his articles. Because of his experiences, people from all over the state asked McKaine to speak. He developed great skill as a speaker from these many speeches. Later, he used that skill to rally support for civil rights action. The white establishment tolerated his talking about racism in South Carolina because he softened the blows by saying that things were worse in Northern cities.

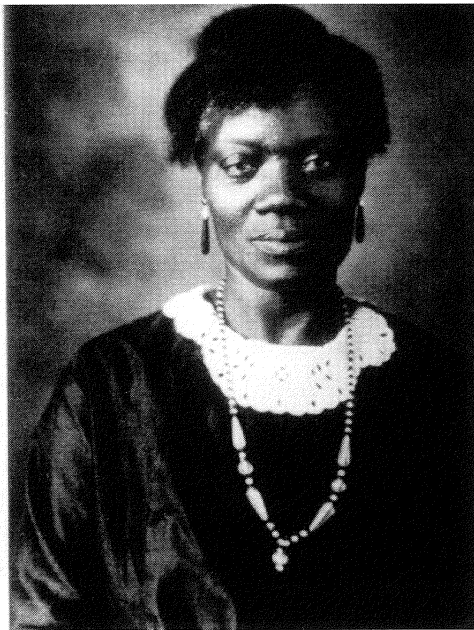
One of the things that most angered Ossie McKaine was the poor public schools for African-American children in the state. The private schools we read about earlier were too few to help all children. McKaine remembered having to go to Boston to get his own education. Part of the problem was money. Since the end of Reconstruction when spending was about the same for both races, the difference had been growing. In 1930, the state spent almost \$53 on each white student compared to only \$5.20 on each black student in public schools. By 1940, the situation had improved somewhat, but it was still very unequal. The state still spent more than three

times as much on white students. Teacher pay was also unfair. McKaine went around the state and collected figures to prove his case. He found that public schools paid white teachers nearly twice as much as equally qualified black teachers. No wonder many African-American teachers left the state in order to earn a living.

McKaine had helped reorganize the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Sumter after it had fallen apart. He convinced the NAACP to make teacher pay their number one issue. McKaine went all over the state making speeches to help raise money for the cause. Money was needed to pay the costs for court cases to get equal pay. In 1944 and 1945, teachers won equal pay in Charleston and Columbia. These first big victories marked the beginning of many things to come.

McKaine also worked to get equal school bus transportation for African-American students. School districts provided bus transportation for white students, but black students had to get to school on their own, no matter how far away they lived. His speeches helped convince local civil rights leaders to begin court cases in this area. The case that began in Clarendon County eventually turned into one of the cases that outlawed school segregation. We shall look at that case later in this chapter.

In the area of voting rights, McKaine helped mount voter registration drives. Voting laws created



Regardless of education, African-Americans were limited in their career options. This woman, photographed around 1920 by Richard Roberts, is shown in both her jewelry and in her maid's uniform. Reproduced from Constance B. Schulz, Ed., The History of S.C. Slide Collection, slide G-83 (Sandlapper Publishing Company, 1989). Courtesy of Roberts family.



Options for work fell mainly in two categories, either in domestic service or in agricultural labor. To survive in agriculture, the entire family had to go to work in back-breaking labor, as this family was in 1939 in a field near Manning. Library of Congress LC-USF34 51919.

difficulties for minorities to register to vote. Because the Democratic Party did not allow African-Americans to participate in party affairs, McKaine helped organize a new branch of the Democratic Party called the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP). In 1944, the PDP nominated him to run against Governor Olin Johnston for the U.S. Senate. McKaine had no chance of winning, but the effort encouraged many average African-American citizens to become interested in voting and politics. McKaine was the first African-American to run for the U.S. Senate in South Carolina since Reconstruction. He went on to help organize voter registration drives all over the South.

In late 1946, the war in Europe was over. McKaine's nightclub in Belgium had survived intact. His business associates there persuaded him to return and reopen it. In 1955, he was about to return to the America. However, he was in poor health. Breathing problems that were complicated by exposure to poison gas back in the First World War led to his death before he could return. In December 1955, Ossie McKaine was buried in Sumter. A military honor guard from Shaw Air Force Base stood at attention as this remarkable man was laid to rest.

The Importance of Organization

Why was organizing civil rights groups like the NAACP so important? The answer to this question lies in

what life was like for most African-American South Carolinians in the early 1900s. They lacked the rights that white South Carolinians had, political, civil, and social rights. Simple physical protection was a problem.

How do you break out of a situation like this? There are two answers. First, you can leave. That is what many people did. They left the state and took with them the talents and energy that could have made the state richer than it is today. You read about this in an earlier chapter. Some, like Ossie McKaine, came back. Most did not.

Second, you can organize politically. There is strength in numbers. If you can get enough people together, you can protect yourself better, and you can work together. You can raise money to challenge laws that prevent you from getting a decent education. With education, you can make more money so that whites want your business and need your skill.

With education, you might be able to pass the literacy test and pay the poll tax that barred so many African-Americans from voting. Of course, the literacy test and poll tax were not the only barriers. State laws prevented all but whites from participating in primary elections. This was called the white primary. Because there were so few Republicans in the state, whoever won the Democratic primary would win the general election. So the primary election is really what

counted. Organization and education could help you take these unjust laws to court.

If you could vote, then politicians would have to pay attention to you. They would have to provide you with the same services they provided white folks. You would have better schools, paved roads in your neighborhood, running water, a sewer system for better sanitation, access to doctors and hospitals and social services when you needed them. You could begin to elect fellow African-Americans to political office and win appointments to boards and commissions and judgeships. You could sit on juries. You could begin to expect equal treatment before the law. You could end laws that segregated buses and hotels and restaurants. You could end school segregation and improve education even more. Finally, you could begin to demand equal job opportunities because you would have the political and economic power to make it happen.

All of this was possible, but first you had to organize politically. That would not be easy in South Carolina. Some whites had done all they could to stamp out any black organization that had a political purpose since the end of Reconstruction in 1876.

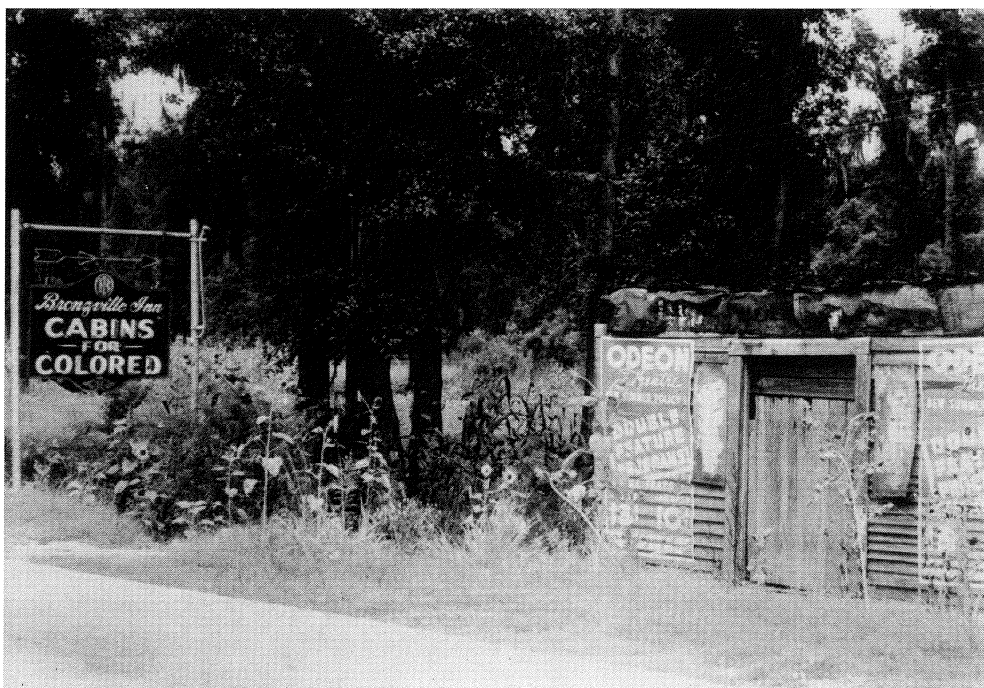
The many self-help organizations we have already studied started the foundation for political organization. The small, but important, middle class that accumulated a little wealth over several generations of hard work added to the foundation. The churches

that gave a few African-Americans an education and trained leaders strengthened the foundation. All of this was necessary before action could take place.

Septima Poinsett Clark

Septima Poinsett Clark was in some ways South Carolina's version of Mary McLeod Bethune. Her work with the African-American children of South Carolina was much like that of Mary McLeod Bethune elsewhere in the South. In 1916, Poinsett began her teaching career on Johns Island. She remembered being paid \$25 a month. Out of that she had to buy all her supplies. The school did not even supply her with chalk. She and her 132 pupils also had to gather their own firewood for the open fire that heated the drafty cabin serving as their one-room school.

Poinsett soon realized that education could not solve problems until the state changed laws to allow African-Americans an equal chance for a good education. Thus, began her long career in civil rights. She became deeply involved in many of the struggles you will read about in this chapter. She helped organize the NAACP in Charleston in the 1920s. The public schools fired her because of her civil rights activity. That did not stop her. In the 1960s, she joined another civil rights group, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). This was the organization founded by Dr. Martin Luther King.



Motels were segregated by race, as were these cabins near Summerton, shown in a 1939 photo. Courtesy of the Library of Congress LC-USF34 51945.



Even state parks were segregated by race, as shown in these two photos of families enjoying their facilities. The top photo is a family picnicking at Hunting Island in June of 1956. The bottom photo shows a group eating outside a cabin at Pleasant Ridge State Park, also in June 1956. Courtesy of the S.C. Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism.



She organized “citizenship schools.” There she helped illiterate African-Americans prepare to read and interpret the state constitution so they could overcome one of the legal barriers to voting.

As if all this were not enough, she was active in the YWCA, the Charleston Public Health Department, and the Tuberculosis Association. As a result, she is often called the grandmother of the civil rights movement in South Carolina.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

After the end of Reconstruction in our state, African-American citizens were no longer able to enjoy their

civil rights. By “civil rights,” we mean those rights all citizens should enjoy as a matter of law in a democracy. Civil rights include the right to vote, the right to be treated equally in courts of law, and equal access to public facilities like schools and public transportation. Having civil rights is necessary to have any chance to succeed in life. In New York in 1909, W. E. B. DuBois and Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of the *New York Evening Post* and grandson of the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, were founding members of the NAACP. William English Walling, a wealthy white southerner whose family had been slave owners; Moorefield Storey, a white Boston lawyer; and several other concerned people were also founders.

Walling was the first chairman of the organization, Storey was the president and DuBois the director of publicity. The first executive secretary of the NAACP was James Weldon Johnson, whom you met earlier as part of the Harlem Renaissance movement. As executive secretary, one of Johnson's duties was to organize chapters of the NAACP throughout the country. The NAACP was founded as an organization of people of different races, and religions from the North and the South.

The NAACP and the efforts they were making to reestablish the civil rights of African-Americans were impressive to black South Carolinians, and they wanted to be a part of the Association. An African-American attorney, Butler W. Nance of Columbia, wrote a letter to W. E. B. DuBois, asking whether a civic club of which he was a member could become a chapter of the NAACP. The club, the Capital City Civic League, was a local civil rights organization. Nance explained in his letter that the only purpose of the club was that "of contesting and contending for our every constitutional right, privilege and immunity, in a quiet, legal and peaceful manner." This civic organization was one of many local organizations throughout South Carolina that were seeking to change by legal means their second-class status within the state. By February of 1917, the Columbia Branch of the NAACP was established as the first branch of the NAACP in South Carolina. Its membership included the ministers of several of the oldest African-American churches in Columbia. Other African-American members were the city's attorneys, a medical doctor, black businessmen, teachers from Benedict College and Allen University, and federal employees. The Columbia chapter began a series of projects. The first was a voter registration drive to get black men registered to vote. In 1920, women in America were given the right to vote. In South Carolina, African-American women were not allowed to register and vote. The Columbia NAACP branch sued the state to enable them to vote.

A chapter of the NAACP was also established in Charleston in 1917, and by 1919 the Columbia and Charleston chapters had more than a thousand members. In Charleston, African-American teachers were able to teach African-American children living

on the islands near Charleston, but not in the city. This practice denied qualified African-American teachers' jobs in Charleston. In 1920, the Charleston NAACP branch succeeded in getting African-American teachers hired to teach in the city of Charleston's black schools.

By 1939, there were eight local branches of the NAACP in South Carolina: Aiken, Charleston, Cheraw, Columbia, Georgetown, Greenville, Florence, and Sumter. These local NAACP branches organized into a state body known as the South Carolina Conference of the NAACP, and, like the national organization, began organizing lawsuits. Initial leaders of the state conference included Levi S. Byrd, who headed the local branch in Cheraw; Reverend A. W. Wright, who was elected the first state president; and Reverend James M. Hinton of the Columbia branch. Hinton later became the leader who took the conference through many important battles over the next twenty years. The NAACP was not like later civil rights organizations such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee that lead demonstrations in order to make changes in the country. The NAACP sought to achieve changes through the use of the courts.

The conference's first law suit was a fight to equalize the salaries of teachers across the state. Black teachers' salaries were less than those of white teachers with the same education and years of teaching. They were paid less because they were black. The teachers won their case in Charleston in 1944 and in Columbia in 1945. After the teachers' salary cases were won, the NAACP next sought to dismantle South Carolina's white primary election. In South Carolina and other southern states, the state political parties did not permit black voters to vote in their primaries. So they had no voice in the selection of candidates to run in the elections. In the white primary cases, Attorney Thurgood Marshall came to South Carolina to represent the National NAACP, and a local attorney, Harold Boulware, represented the local branches. The case called *Elmore v. Rice* was won in 1947. The South Carolina Democratic Party was able to circumvent the ruling, and the NAACP had to develop a second case, *Brown v. Baskins*, in



An example of a private library provided for African-Americans near Bettis Academy in Edgefield County. Photo by Aimee Smith.

order to obtain full voting rights. The second case was won in July of 1948. The most important lawsuit begun by the NAACP in South Carolina was the school integration case that began in Clarendon County in 1947. The case became part of the Supreme Court decision *Brown v. The Topeka Board of Education* that was decided by the court on May 17, 1954.

South Carolina African-Americans who petitioned the state school boards to comply with the *Brown* decision often lost their jobs or suffered economic reprisals. State and national NAACP members sent food and clothing to needy victims. Donations came from other organizations and from prominent black churches such as Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church, pastored by Congressman Adam Clayton Powell. Donations came from faraway places like Europe and South America.

After the NAACP won the lawsuits to invalidate the white primary and to integrate the public schools, many leaders in South Carolina realized the NAACP was changing South Carolina. To prevent the NAACP from making changes in the state, an attempt was made to destroy the organization. One of the most common charges against the organization was that it was a communist organization. This charge was disproved. In April of 1956, the South Carolina legislature passed a law "which barred state, county or municipal employees from membership in the NAACP." The NAACP survived the attacks even though many of its members suffered job losses.

Modjeska Monteith Simkins

One of the most important and active officers in the state organization was Modjeska Monteith Simkins. Born to Henry and Rachel Monteith in 1899 in Columbia, Modjeska Monteith became one of the most important civil rights leaders in the state's history. Her great-grandmother had been an enslaved African belonging to Wade Hampton. Her father worked as a builder in construction to send her to Benedict College for her entire education. Back in those days, Benedict provided education from the first grade through college. Simkins remembered having very good teachers. She was one of the last students who was taught at Benedict by white Northerners. These teachers were schooled in some of the best Northern universities and came to Benedict to teach for idealistic reasons.

Modjeska Monteith was a member of a remarkable family. From her father she learned pride and courage. He was brave enough to stand up to white racists. With a rifle in hand, he defended the family one night when racists attacked his home. She may have acquired her organizational skills from her mother, who started a church in the living room of their home. One of her brothers, H. D. Monteith, became a medical doctor. He founded Victory Savings Bank, the only bank in the state owned and run by African-Americans.

After college, Monteith became a teacher at Booker T. Washington High School. She was a very

demanding teacher in the six algebra classes she taught each day. If students did not bring in an assignment, she made them stay at school until it was finished. In 1929 she married Andrew Simkins, a successful businessman from Edgefield.

Modjeska Simkins served as the secretary of the NAACP until the mid-1950s. She did publicity for the group and raised money. She helped plan the court cases that really began to change things: equal pay for teachers of both races, ending the white-only primary, providing school bus transportation for both races, and ending school segregation. She was also active in improving health care. In addition, she was active in business. For many years she ran the accounting department for her brother's bank. She

A Richard Roberts photo in the early 1920s of Modjeska Monteith before she married and took the last name of Simkins. At the time she was teaching six classes of algebra each day at Booker T. Washington School in Columbia. Courtesy of Roberts family.



worked for the Tuberculosis Association. In the 1960s, she challenged the state Mental Health Department to provide better facilities for both races and equal pay for whites and blacks working in them.

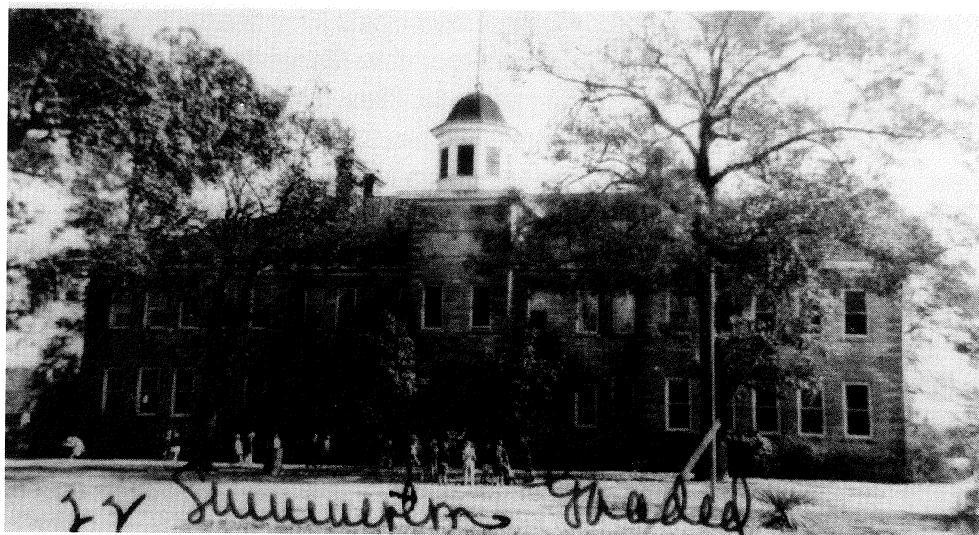
When Modjeska Monteith Simkins died in 1992, she was remembered as someone who spoke her mind. She was a strong advocate for anybody who was treated unfairly. Race did not matter.

School Integration

One of the most important civil rights cases in U.S. History started with the NAACP's help in Clarendon County. It began as a simple effort to obtain school buses for African-American children. In recent years, people sometimes have objected to school busing. Modjeska Simkins remembered that busing was not an issue until the state was asked to provide buses for both races. For a long time, schools had provided school buses for white children. Black children had to find their own rides. Sometimes they had to walk ten miles or more each way.

When the state did not provide buses, sometimes parents did it themselves. Clarence McFadden was one such parent. As a sharecropper with only a fourth-grade education, he wanted his children to have a better chance than he did. Just as in Clarendon County, Lee County, where McFadden lived, had buses only for whites. In the mid-1940s, McFadden made several trips each day in his car taking his and other children to school. Too many children needed rides. So he and some friends bought an old 1935 Chevy bus for a little over \$100. They repaired it and paid all the costs themselves. He drove it for several years before the county began to give him any help. Donations paid for gas and upkeep. Sometimes parents gave him beans, eggs, peas, or even chickens to help out. His children all graduated from high school, and several even earned college degrees.

The NAACP persuaded a group of fourteen brave parents to start a court case in Clarendon County. They asked the state to give their children transportation to their schools just like white children had to their own schools. Among these parents was Harry Briggs. Because his name was last on the list, the court named the case for him along with the school official who was being sued *Briggs v. Elliott*. Later,



Summerton school for white children and Liberty Hill school for African-American children. Even as late as around 1950 there was still a striking contrast in public schools for each race. Just before the famous Brown and Briggs decision of 1954, the state tried to avoid ending the dual system by imposing a sales tax to build schools for African-Americans. State Budget and Control Board, Sinking Fund Commission, Insurance File photographs, 1948-51, S.C. Department of History and Archives.



the NAACP decided to expand the case and ask for total equality in education. Other parents joined the case so that the list numbered 100.

The case was not an easy one. People needed courage to place their names on the list. Local whites who controlled jobs fired many of those involved in the case. They could not get loans or buy goods in local stores owned by whites. Those in business found it impossible to secure the things they needed to keep their businesses open. Some even had their homes firebombed. A local gas station fired Harry Briggs from his job. A local motel fired Annie Gibson, another of the parents whose name was on the suit. The Reverend J. A. Delaine had helped organize the case. He was an AME minister at several churches and was also a teacher and principal in the local schools. The local school board fired him and several family mem-

bers who were teachers. The state even made membership in the NAACP grounds for firing public employees like school teachers. This clearly violated the constitutional right of free assembly.

Briggs became one of several cases from different states that the U.S. Supreme Court heard together in 1954. Together they were known as *Brown v. Board of Education*. The lawyer for the NAACP was Thurgood Marshall, who later became the first African-American on the U.S. Supreme Court. When the Court decided these cases in favor of school desegregation in 1954, DeLaine's church was burned to the ground. He was physically chased out of the state with threats on his life. Given the long and sad history of lynchings in the state, he had every reason to be afraid. With the help of friends, he safely escaped to New York. There, he founded a new church

and served as its minister. He never returned to South Carolina to live, though he came close. He retired to Charlotte, North Carolina. He lived there until his death in 1974, exactly twenty years after the famous case that changed South Carolina and the nation.

Sadly, the Supreme Court decision of 1954 did not end school segregation. The state tried to quickly build and improve African-American schools in order to claim that schools were equal. The state passed the first three-cent sales tax for this purpose. The tax did not work. The Supreme Court had said that any separate schools were unequal. What schools looked like did not matter. Having two separate school systems was also wasteful. As a poor state, South Carolina did not have the money for one good school system. It certainly could not afford two.

Whites resisted for many years. Many left public schools and started their own segregated private schools. In some parts of the state even today, most whites attend private schools, and most students in the public schools are black. In many places, officials tried token integration. They would let a few blacks into mostly white schools and hope that the courts would be satisfied. African-American parents had to once again take the schools to court.

The real change in education finally came in the middle 1960s. The U.S. Congress threatened to cut off all federal money if states did not completely integrate schools. In addition, federal courts ran out of

patience. They allowed no further delay.

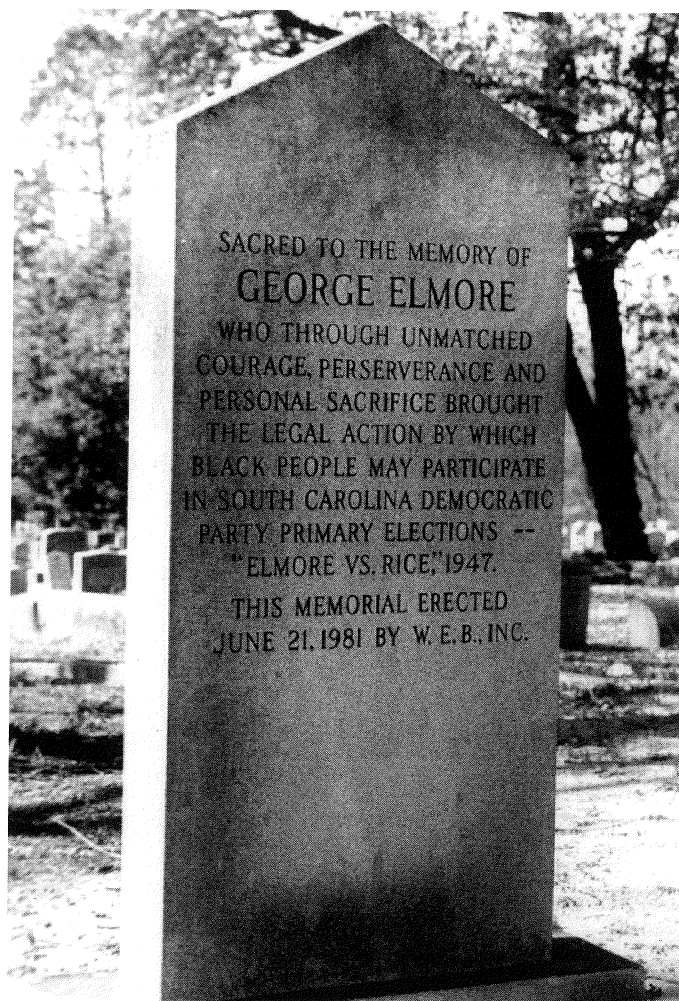
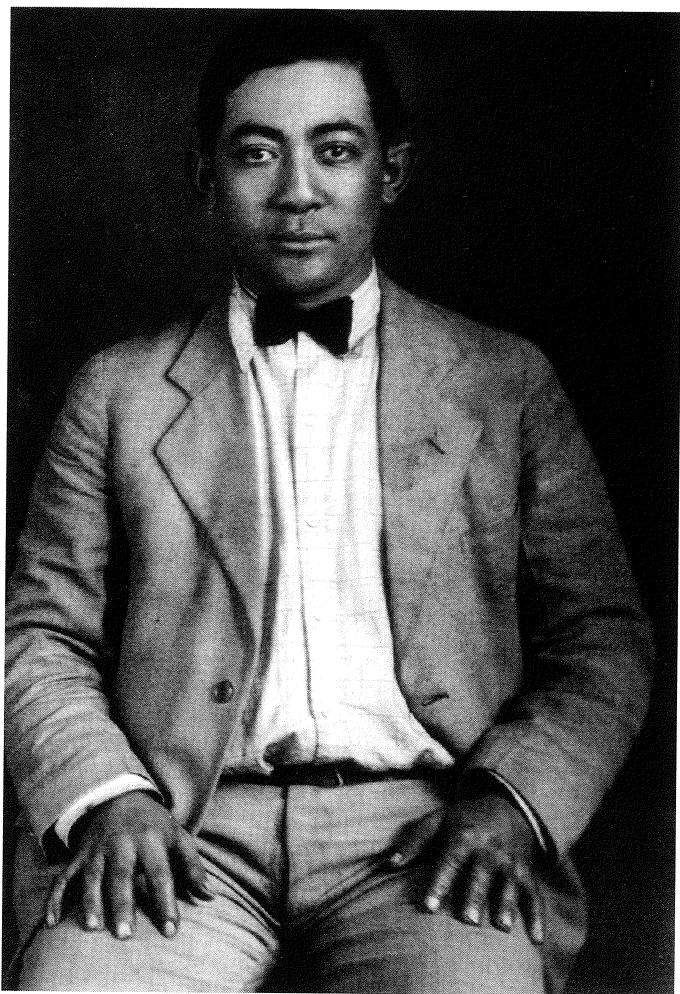
In January of 1963, Governor Ernest "Fritz" Hollings admitted that white efforts to keep schools segregated had failed. In a widely reported speech, Hollings said that "South Carolina is running out of courts. If and when every legal remedy has been exhausted. . . we must realize the lessons of 100 years ago and move on for the good of South Carolina. . . . This must be done with dignity. It must be done with law and order." With this speech, Hollings left office. The new governor, Donald Russell, invited citizens of both races to share barbecue with each other at the Governor's mansion. They came and ate together.

Within a few days, the federal courts ordered that Clemson University admit Harvey Gantt of Charleston. By the end of the month, Gantt was the first African-American to become a student at Clemson. He graduated and later in life won election as mayor of Charlotte, North Carolina. Looking back at those difficult times, Gantt is not at all bitter. He gives some credit to whites in South Carolina. Even if whites were morally opposed to doing the right thing, Gantt feels whites had good manners about integration. He feels that students in South Carolina did not have as hard a time as those in other states where they almost always faced angry white mobs.

The University of South Carolina (USC) at Columbia was integrated eight months later. To the credit



Harvey Gantt, right, talking to Matthew Perry, who served as his attorney in gaining admission to Clemson University in 1963. Reproduced from Constance B. Schulz, Ed., The History of S.C. Slide Collection, slide B-197 (Sandlapper Publishing Company, 1989). Photo by Vic Tutte. Courtesy of The State newspaper.



(Left) A Richard Roberts photo of George Elmore in the 1920s. In 1946, Mr. Elmore attempted to vote in the state's all white primary and became the person behind the test case that led to overturning segregated election laws. Thurgood Marshall argued that case before U.S. District Judge Waties Waring in the case Elmore vs. Rice. Courtesy of Roberts family. (Right) A monument to George Elmore in the B. F. Roberts Cemetery in Columbia. Elmore and his family were harassed for his brave actions in the civil rights movement. Photo by Aimee Smith.

of all concerned, it happened very quietly. The move sparked no protests or demonstrations. Three African-American students, Robert Anderson, James L. Solomon, and Henri Monteith were the first to break the color barrier. Monteith was the grandniece of Modjeska Simkins. She earned a degree in biochemistry at USC. Later, she earned her doctorate and became famous for her research and for work with young people. Solomon went onto a career in public service. He sat on school boards in two counties and was on the Richland County Council. Later, he directed the State Department of Social Services.

Many average people made sacrifices to gain better educational opportunity for all. They took per-

sonal risks to bring about change. We should not forget them and what they did.

This fairly happy ending has a sad side. Most citizens across the state share schools and learn from each other as well as learn with each other. That is not the case where it all started in Clarendon County. Whites left the local public schools rather than integrate. The result is that once again Clarendon County has two school systems.

Voting Rights

In 1944, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that primary election laws blocking African-Americans from vot-

ing were illegal. Although, the test case for this ruling came from Texas, civil rights leaders in South Carolina played an indirect role. They raised money to help pay the legal costs for that case.

After this victory, black leaders in the state called upon white leaders to obey the law. White leaders chose instead to change the law. Governor Olin Johnston called a special session of the General Assembly for that purpose. In what was called the "South Carolina Plan," the state repealed all laws about primaries and tried to make the Democratic Party into a private club. As a private club, they would be free to turn away minorities.

African-American groups all over the state united against this obvious attempt to evade the law of the land. The Palmetto Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical Association, the state association for African-American doctors, dentists, and druggists charged that this action violated basic rights. They and other groups asked how America could expect African-Americans to fight in World War II and buy war bonds if the state did this to them. White leaders did not answer.

George A. Elmore tried to vote in the Democratic primary in August 1946. The Party refused him, and the NAACP filed its case. In July 1947, the courts ruled against the state in the case known as *Elmore v. Rice*. Federal Judge Waties Waring ruled that all citizens must be allowed to vote regardless of race.

The battle was not yet over. There were still barriers to overcome. A poll tax prevented many African-Americans from voting. The greatest barrier

was the literacy test, which was applied in unfair ways. Voting officials asked African-Americans who wanted to vote to read and interpret the most complicated parts of the state constitution. The white registrar decided if they passed. Whites in the state came up with new barriers. In some parts of the state, officials required African-Americans to take an oath if they intended to vote. The oath said they "solemnly swear. . .to support the social, religious, and educational separation of the races." Few African-Americans were willing to take this insulting oath. Once again, whites had to be taken to court. The courts ruled this barrier to be illegal.

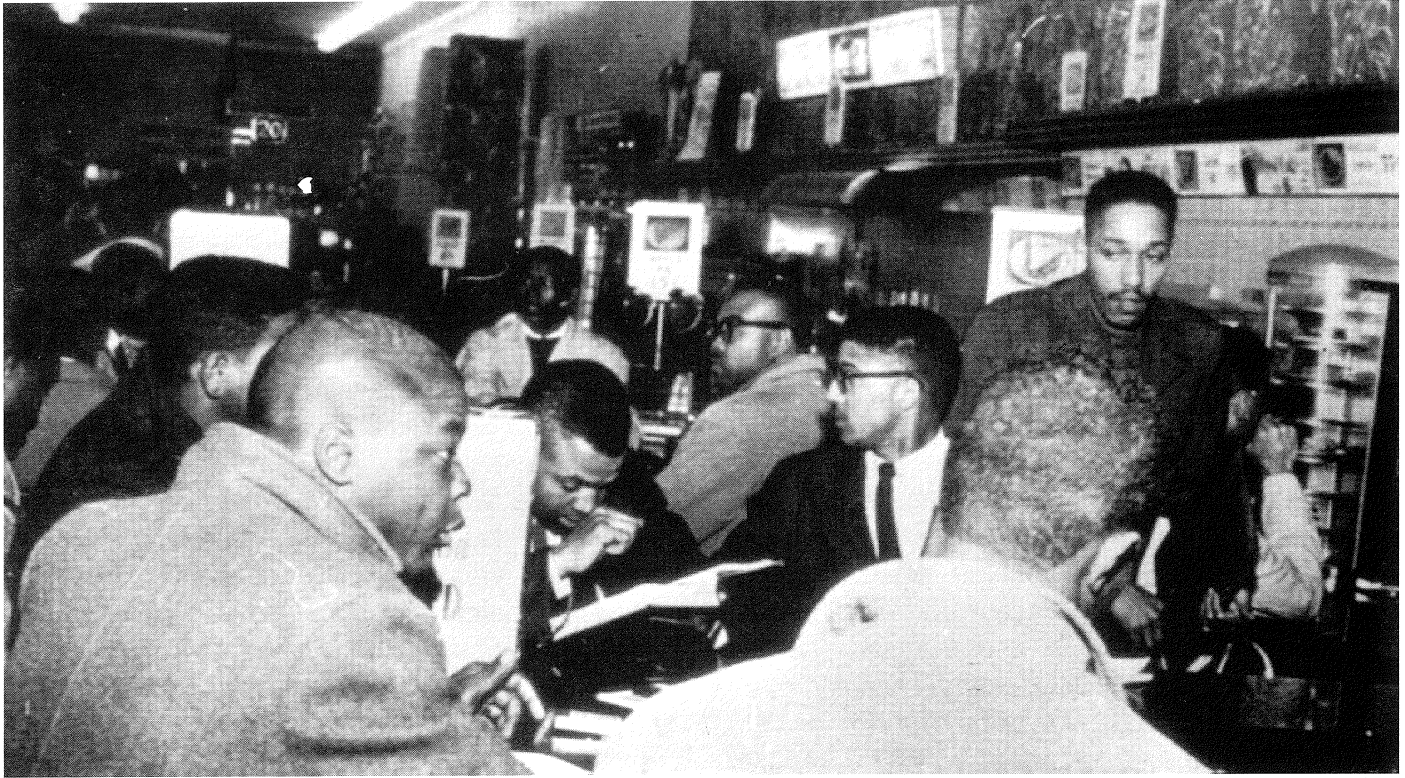
Despite these victories, voting discrimination continued. Enough African-Americans were able to vote in some areas of the state so that they began to see better treatment by state and local government. However, few voted in many parts of the state, especially rural areas where organization was weak. Threats of violence and unfair literacy tests still stood in the way.

Only after the U.S. Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 did all citizens have an equal right to vote. The new law ended the literacy test and threatened to use federal officials to register African-Americans to vote if local officials failed to do so. Even here, South Carolina resisted. It challenged the Voting Rights Act in a case that went all the way to the Supreme Court before the state lost.

Earlier victories in voting rights helped win passage of civil rights laws. Enough African-Americans



Monument at S.C. State College campus to those who died in the gunfire of the state patrol. Photo by Aimee Smith.



*A sit-in demonstration in Columbia in the 1960s. Usually, it was college students who led demonstrations. Reproduced from Constance B. Schulz, Ed., *The History of S.C. Slide Collection*, slide B-196 (Sandlapper Publishing Company, 1989). Photo by Vic Tutte. Courtesy of The State newspaper.*

were voting in 1960 to help John Kennedy win the state in his race for the White House. Kennedy was the first president to ask for broad and strong civil rights legislation. The new laws did not pass until after Kennedy was killed. However, without pressure from African-American voters, the president would not have proposed the laws. Both Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, his vice president who succeeded him in the White House, owed their election to African-American voters.

Moderation and Violence

As long as integration took place only on a token basis, South Carolina avoided the violence that was taking place in many other Southern states. Much of the credit for the relative peace should go to African-American leaders in the state. Credit goes to NAACP leaders such as James Hinton, James McCain, Modjeska Simkins, and Matthew Perry. They were much more moderate in their demands than the whites were in their resistance. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, African-American leaders urged patience

combined with slow and peaceful progress.

In most parts of the state, slow and peaceful progress took place. A few exceptions occurred. By the late 1960s, the violence and turmoil found in the rest of the nation reached South Carolina.

In Orangeburg the local white majority refused to go beyond token integration. Students at S.C. State College were not willing to be quite as patient as their parents. From their point of view, whites had violated the law long enough. The time had arrived to fully integrate whether whites liked it or not. When confronted with more than token school integration and demands for full access to restaurants and other public facilities, some whites reacted with force.

Throughout the 1960s, many protests took place in Orangeburg. In 1967, students protested the firing of two popular white professors whom the school administration saw as too radical. That protest led to the resignation of S.C. State's president.

In February of 1968, white highway patrol officers shot their weapons into a crowd of protesting students. Three students were killed and another

twenty-eight were wounded. The students were protesting the refusal of a local bowling alley to integrate. They lit a bonfire on the edge of the campus. The students threw bottles and other objects, and one object hit a policeman. After a few minutes, a patrol officer fired a warning shot in the air. Other officers immediately shot into the crowd. A monument marks the spot today.

According to Jack Bass, a reporter who was covering the event at the time and who later helped write a book on the tragedy, the shootings should never have taken place. The patrol was backed up by National Guard troops and was in no real danger. Patrol leaders made the fatal error of allowing officers to decide on their own when to fire, rather than wait for an order as did the National Guard.

The real tragedy was the refusal of state officials to admit any mistakes. They blamed the confrontation on Cleveland Sellers. Sellers, a native of Denmark, South Carolina, was on campus to organize a protest for SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. This was a civil rights group that was active all over the nation. Local authorities and Governor McNair labeled Sellers as an outside agitator and a troublemaker.

Sellers may have come from outside Orangeburg, but he was certainly not from outside of the state. He was of a younger generation of African-Americans who were impatient with the slow legal tactics of the NAACP. In 1960, he had participated in some of the first sit-in demonstrations in the state in his home town of Denmark. He and friends at Voorhees College sat at a "whites only" counter at a local drugstore lunch counter and asked for service. They refused to leave and police arrested them.

Sellers arrived at the protest meeting at the S.C. State campus just before the shooting took place. One of the shots wounded him. The state arrested him and charged him with incitement to riot. At Sellers' trial, with the jury out of the court room, the judge told lawyers that no real evidence against Sellers existed. Nevertheless, the judge went ahead and allowed the jury to deliver its verdict. They found him guilty and the judge sentenced him to a year in prison.

Cleveland Sellers could easily have become totally embittered by this injustice. Instead, he worked

to do positive things. While waiting for his case to come to trial, which took nearly three years, he earned a masters degree in education from Harvard University. After several months, prison officials freed him for good behavior. Then, he worked for the City of Greensboro, N.C. and earned a doctorate in education. In 1990, he moved back to his hometown of Denmark and worked in a real estate business. In July of 1993, the state granted him a full pardon. That same year, he began teaching courses at the University of South Carolina in Columbia in the African-American Studies Department. In addition, he continued to serve the state as a member of the State Board of Education. He has been working to give all children the chance denied to so many generations of African-American children.

In 1969, South Carolina narrowly avoided violence, thanks in large part to the restraint and patience of African-Americans. Civil rights and labor leaders from around the nation came to Charleston to help in a hospital workers' strike. About 300 women, mostly African-Americans, were protesting low wages and poor working conditions at the hospital run by the Medical University of South Carolina. Police arrested hundreds of them. Thousands of National Guard troops arrived. Tensions ran high, but protests remained peaceful. The strikers finally won. As Rosetta Simmons saw it, this was a victory for all poor people in the state, not just for her and her fellow workers.

In 1970, violence struck in Lamar, South Carolina. Schools there were finally integrating. African-Americans had been patient, waiting for the courts to order integration. Whites had resisted, refusing to voluntarily integrate. When the courts ordered integration and school buses with black children arrived at formerly all-white schools, white mobs met them. Angry whites overturned a bus, frightening young children in a way the children would never forget. Then the authorities restored order.

The Impact of Voting

By 1970, enough African-Americans were voting to change the state. In the election for governor, the Republicans ran Congressman Albert Watson. He openly appealed to whites who wanted to go back to the era of segregation. Democrat John West de-

feated Watson. West won by combining the votes of black voters with those of progressive whites. Once in office, Governor West created the state Human Affairs Commission. Its purpose was to bring about fair treatment, to stop discrimination, and to encourage understanding and respect. The head of the commission was James E. Clyburn. Clyburn served well in this most difficult position until 1992. Then he ran for the U.S. Congress and was elected. He became South Carolina's first African-American to win a seat in Congress since the 1800s.

In 1970, three African-Americans, I. S. Leevy Johnson, James Felder, and Herbert Fielding were elected to the House of Representatives in the General Assembly. However, winning elections was hard for African-Americans because of the way district lines were drawn. Voters from each county as a whole chose all the legislators in that county. This is called "at-large" elections. Therefore, winning was impossible for a black candidate unless blacks were a majority in the county or unless a lot of white voters voted for him. Only a few counties had enough African-Americans in the county as a whole to elect African-American legislators.

After a series of court rulings decided that district lines could not be drawn to discriminate against African-Americans, South Carolina changed its election laws. One of these rulings took place as a result of a 1960 court case, *Gomillion v. Lightfoot*. Even though this case began in Alabama, a native South Carolinian put his life on the line.

Dr. Charles Gomillion was born in 1901 in Johnston, South Carolina. The public schools there provided only three months of school each year. Parents found enough money to extend school another two months. Although Gomillion had only about an eighth-grade formal education, Paine College in Augusta accepted him as a probationary student. By working hard he succeeded. He earned his Ph.D. from Ohio State and went to teach at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. He began fighting for the right to vote in the 1930s. By the 1950s, he and others had managed to get a fairly large number of African-Americans registered to vote. Whites in power felt threatened. Whites tried to redraw district lines so the lines split



DeQuincey Newman, 1983. Reproduced from Constance B. Schulz, Ed., The History of S.C. Slide Collection, slide B-212 (Sandlapper Publishing Company, 1989). Photo by Jeff Amberg. Courtesy of The State newspaper.

black voters into several districts. Then blacks would not have enough votes in any district to elect anyone to the city council. That was when Dr. Gomillion went to court. He won. Drawing district lines to discriminate, a practice known as "gerrymandering," was illegal.

In 1974, the S.C. Legislature changed "at large" county-wide districts to smaller districts of equal size. Each district would elect only one representative. This made it more likely that enough African-American voters would live in a district to elect an African-American candidate. That year, voters elected ten more African-Americans to the General Assembly. With more than a dozen members, African-American legislators formed the Legislative Black Caucus so they could work together. Caucus is simply a fancy

word for meeting. Ernest Finney, Jr., the first chairperson of the group, became an associate justice on the S.C. Supreme Court in 1985.

Progress continued. Federal Court rulings stopped the S.C. Senate from using county lines as district lines. The Senate had to draw lines so that the same number of people lived in each district. In 1983, voters elected the Reverend Isaiah DeQuincey Newman to the state Senate. He was the first African-American senator since 1886.

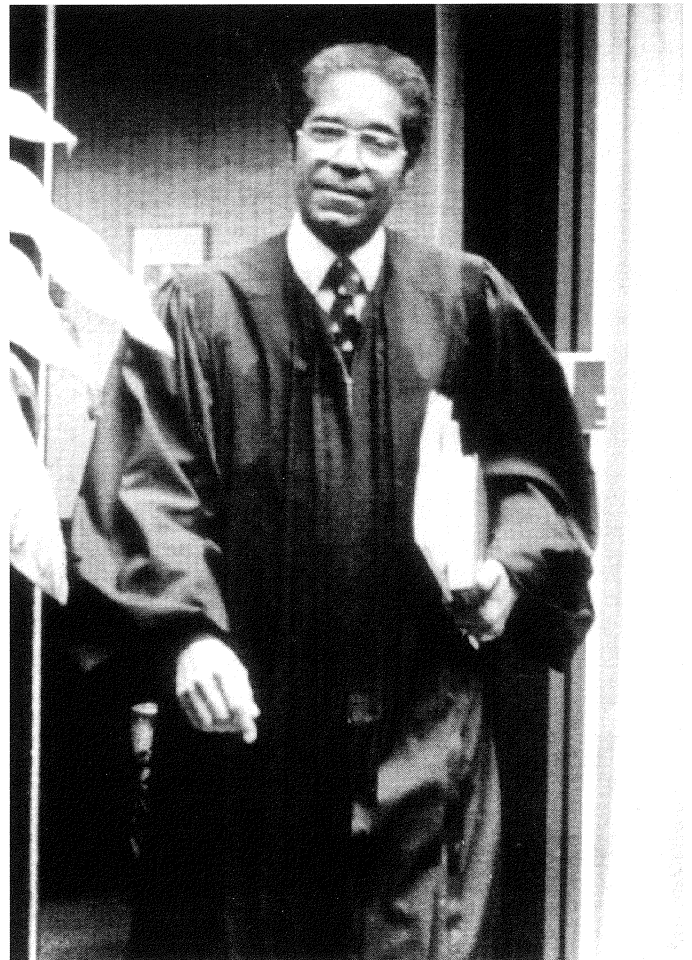
Newman had come a long way. He was born on a farm in Darlington County in 1911. When he was eight, he saw the Ku Klux Klan burn an African-American convict alive. He remembered shining shoes for state senators in the 1920s. He had been a member of the NAACP since his college days in Atlanta. When he returned to South Carolina in 1937, he began a career as an educator and a pastor in Pageland. He began working with the South Carolina NAACP. By the mid-1940s, he was state vice president. In 1943, he helped organize the NAACP in Orangeburg. In December 1958, Newman was elected president of the South Carolina Conference of the NAACP. He resigned a few months later to become field director of the organization. His function was to coordinate the activities of the NAACP in South Carolina, this was a paid position. During his tenure as field secretary, he focused the organization on four areas. He got petitions to desegregate schools. He led economic boycotts to provide jobs for African-Americans. He led "wade-ins" to open public parks and beaches and "sit-ins" to open public facilities to African-Americans. Under Newman's leadership, several thousand citizens were involved in civil rights activities. More than 2,000 persons were arrested in South Carolina from 1960-1965, and Newman was arrested five times. He remembered being chased in his car at 120 miles an hour all the way through Marion and Florence Counties by an angry mob of whites. They were upset that he had led a peaceful "wade-in" protest at Myrtle Beach State Park.

In 1983, Newman became South Carolina's first African-American state senator since Reconstruction. A few weeks after Newman won a seat in the Senate, Senator Marion Gressette ask Newman for a favor. Gressette had been one of the most stubborn opponents of integration. In the 1950s, the Gressette

Committee was established to help maintain a legal and political challenge to school desegregation in South Carolina. Senator Gressette asked for the honor of being photographed with Newman. Senator Newman knew that he had won the fight.

Senator Strom Thurmond saw the importance of African-American voters. When whites were the only ones voting, he had tried to stop civil rights. He holds the all-time record for "filibuster" in the U.S. Senate in trying to stop a civil rights bill from passing. Filibuster means talking nonstop until the other side gives up. Realizing that times were changing, Thurmond sponsored the appointment of Matthew J. Perry to become a federal judge in 1976.

A 1983 photo of Matthew J. Perry, civil rights lawyer and the state's first African-American federal judge. Reproduced from Constance B. Schulz, Ed., The History of S.C. Slide Collection, slide C-112 (Sandlapper Publishing Company, 1989). Photo by Vic Tutte. Courtesy of The State newspaper.



For more than twenty years before this, Perry had been the NAACP's chief lawyer in the state. For example, Perry had won key cases like that which forced the integration of Clemson. He also won the case that forced the legislature to move to single-member districts. Perry went on to have a distinguished career as a federal judge.

In 1990, Senator Theo Mitchell won the Democratic nomination for governor. He was the first African-American ever nominated for governor by the Democrats. Although he lost to the popular Republican incumbent governor, Carroll Campbell, the campaign was a real milestone. It was also important because neither candidate campaigned on racial issues. However, race was doubtless an unspoken issue in the minds of many voters. The state still had not overcome the burden of its history.

The Legislative Black Caucus

After the 1992 election, twenty-five African-American legislators sat in the 170-member S.C. General Assembly. That is fifteen percent, about half the percentage of African-Americans in the general population. However, it is enough to make a difference. Organized into the Legislative Black Caucus, they were now in a stronger position to continue the work begun nearly two decades earlier.

The Black Caucus has played a significant role in the making of many laws. The establishment of the S.C. Human Affairs Commission, which investigates instances of discrimination on the basis of race, age, or gender, was one of the group's more notable accomplishments. The Caucus was also instrumental in passing a law that allowed state employees the option of Martin Luther King day as a holiday. The Caucus persuaded the governor to create an office to promote minority business. It helped pass laws that encouraged the state to consider buying goods and services from minority-owned and run businesses. Listed below are the members of the Legislative Black Caucus as of the 1993-94 legislative session, including the chairperson of the group, Rep. Joe Brown. All together the members have nearly 150 years of experience in the S.C. General Assembly.

Legislative Black Caucus Members: 1993-94

Senate

Sen. Robert Ford
Sen. Maggie Wallace Glover
Sen. Darrell Jackson
Sen. John W. Matthews
Sen. Theo Mitchell
Sen. Kay Patterson
Sen. McKinley Washington, Jr.

House of Representatives

Rep. Ralph Anderson
Rep. Donald W. Beatty
Rep. Floyd Breeland
Rep. Joe E. Brown
Rep. Alma W. Byrd
Rep. Ralph W. Canty
Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter
Rep. Jerry Govan, Jr.
Rep. Jesse Hines
Rep. Curtis B. Inabinett
Rep. Kenneth Kennedy
Rep. W. B. McMahan
Rep. Bessie Moody-Lawrence
Rep. Joseph H. Neal
Rep. John L. Scott
Rep. Lucille S. Whipper
Rep. Juanita M. White
Rep. Dewitt Williams

In the 1980s, the courts extended single-member districts to county council districts, city council districts, and school boards. One of the key cases started in Edgefield County. As a child Tom McCain attended Bettis Academy and later became a college math professor. He felt the "at-large" method of electing council members was unfair. His case took ten years, but he was a patient man. Starting his case in 1974, he finally won it in 1984. He later became County Administrator in Edgefield.

McCain's long effort had a dramatic effect. African-American communities and neighborhoods could now get representation that had once been nearly impossible. In Edgefield County, about two of every five voters are African-Americans. With the "at-large" method of electing the county council, no

African-Americans were elected. After the 1984 court ruling, the county changed to single-member districts. The result was that African-Americans won two or three of the five county council seats in the years that followed. Other units of government began making the same changes.

This change meant that local governments had to begin caring about everyone's needs. They could no longer just provide services to white areas. Black areas were able to get streets paved and parks built. They had better access to human services. With power in city halls and county governments, African-Americans found jobs more easily in government service.

Benefit for All

If we are able to meet the educational and social needs of all citizens, more citizens will be productive. We will all have a happier, healthier, and wealthier state.

South Carolinians continue to play an important role in the civil rights movement. Dr. William Gibson, a dentist from Greenville, is president of the state NAACP. Like so many others, he became involved in the civil rights movement in the 1960s. The national NAACP, an organization with 400,000 members,

chose Gibson to be their vice chairperson. When the chairperson died in 1985, Gibson took over the top position on the board. As chairperson, he was involved in setting goals for the NAACP. One of his goals was to see that African-Americans get their "fair share" of opportunities in life. He wants to ensure that government and business promote blacks as well as whites into decision-making positions. This includes both management roles and positions on boards and commissions. Gibson also believes in the importance of the vote. African-Americans must turn out at election time if they are to have an influence on government policies.

Nelson B. Rivers, III, is a former executive director and currently the executive director of the state NAACP. At a celebration of black history in February of 1993, he told an Aiken audience that we should remember the past because people gave their lives for the freedoms we now enjoy. He graduated from the Citadel. Only a few years ago the Citadel would not have let him attend. About the only thing he could have been at the school was a janitor. While much progress must yet be made, a great deal of progress has taken place. That progress is one of the greatest contributions of African-Americans.

